

NSC BRIEFING

27 JUNE 1956

GUATEMALA

- I. A bloody clash on 25 June between police and protesting University students in Guatemala City has brought about a Government declaration of a nationwide "state of siege". Four students were killed and 13 injured in Monday's demonstration, when the police fired on the marching students.
 - A. The demonstration was staged in protest against the Government's curtailment of constitutional rights, by means of a declaration of a "state of alarm" in the early hours of Sunday morning and against arrest of student demonstrators later that day.
 - B. Some 500 arrests have been made among student demonstrators, but a full-scale students' strike apparently is now in progress and further disturbances are expected.
- II. The Government's original "state of alarm" decree was designed as a preventive measure following discovery of an alleged Communist plot to "exploit" the 24-25 June celebration of the 1944 overthrow of dictator Ubico.
 - A. On 23 June, President Castillo Armas told our Embassy of his concern over the seditious behavior of leftist students and intellectuals.
 1. He stated that his own supporters had become "impatient" over his toleration of such behavior.
 2. the Army advised Castillo to "Clean up" the situation.

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State Dept. review completed

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III. Although leftists of varying degrees are playing an important part in the present Guatemalan disturbances, in our view the major threat to continuation of the Castillo regime (two years old this July 3rd) would come from disaffection of his rightist support.

- A. The situation, to the present, has probably cost Castillo some of his support from the majority of politically-conscious Guatemalans--middle-class, professional and labor elements.
- B. However, at this stage, his support from conservatives, business circles and civilian members of his own "liberation" movement has probably increased.
- C. At present, the key force in Guatemalan stability--the army--is also supporting Castillo.
- D. US Ambassador Sparks, citing the inflammatory effect of the police shootings, anticipates a reaction which "may undermine" the Castillo regime's prestige and even stability.
- E. Unless continued disorder and stern suppressive measures bring about a general revulsion, however, we believe that both the Army and the rightists will probably continue their support.

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